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SUMMARY OF COMMENTARY IN PRAVDA ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
(December 15, 1979 - January 26, 1980)

February 1980

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

Summary of Articles on Sub-Saharan Africa in Pravda
(15 Dec 79 - 26 Jan 80)

The following summaries were selected from the reportage of African events in Pravda, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The small number of articles accurately reflects the scant attention paid to this continent during the period. Only short, factual pieces dealing with Africa, similar to those found in any Western newspaper, have not been included.

It would be very difficult and risky to attempt to define Soviet intentions in Africa based solely on what they state in the press. But there is a valid assumption that what they choose to report in their controlled press must, in some manner, serve their interests. By uncovering what their interests are, and what priority they assign them, then a clearer understanding of their intentions becomes possible.

There are two basic types of articles included in this collection. One type is written from a distinctly Soviet point of view which mixes fact with omission and is usually designed to illustrate the shortcomings of the West. The other type reports on the African situation by using what African leaders say, but quoting selectively so that Africans echo exactly what the Soviets have declared in the past.

Summary of Commentary in Pravda on Sub-Saharan Africa
(15 Dec 79 - 26 Jan 80)

Africa, General

Socialist Nations' Support for Progressive Countries

The presence of American carrier-task forces in the Indian Ocean region was the result of the oppressive, militaristic psychosis of the Pentagon explained an article. Imperialist circles, it went on to say, still had not understood that Gunboat Diplomacy was a thing of the past. The young nations of the world, which have undertaken courses of progressive socio-economic changes are no longer alone, but have at their disposal the powerful support of the Socialist nations. (3 Jan 80, p. 1)

Imperialism's Stake in Africa

A "concerned reader" characterized the recent NATO decision to deploy new medium-range missiles in Western Europe not as a response to any imaginary Soviet threat but, rather, as evidence of those nations' fear over losing their positions in countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. By using nuclear blackmail against the USSR, the imperialists hope to disrupt the solidarity between the Socialist and the young, independent, progressive nations. (10 Jan 80, p. 5)

Madagascar

Strengthening Ties with the USSR

Members of a delegation of the Politburo of the National Front for the Defense of the Revolution in Madagascar met with Boris Ponomarev, candidate member of the Soviet Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. They were bearing a message for the General Secretary and President, L. I. Brezhnev, from the President of Madagascar, D. Ratsiraka. The meeting was devoted to questions regarding strengthening the ties between the two nations. (16 Jan 80, p. 4)

Namibia

SWAPO Tactics

The President of SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, stated that an armed struggle was the only realistic course for the present in Namibia. He promised to wage battle in every region of that country against the racist South African occupation forces, including the administrative center of Windhoek. (4 Jan 80, p. 1)

Organization of African Unity and Namibia

The Organization of African Unity met in Dar es Salaam and declared their militant solidarity with the liberation movement in Namibia. The delegates also expressed their extreme concern over the continued, unlawful occupation of Namibia by South African troops. (26 Jan 80, p. 5)

Seychelles

Imperialist - Inspired Coup Attempts

In an article surveying the recent political situation in the Seychelles, the Soviet correspondent accepts as fact President Rene's account of attempted coups against his progressive government. A direct link is established between the latest groups of "conspirators", unnamed business circles in Great Britain and South Africa, and world imperialism. (15 Dec 79, p. 5)

Republic of South Africa

Revolutionary Situation in the Republic of South Africa

An article summarizing the activities of the 68-year old African National Congress claimed that this organization's policies in South Africa had sufficiently mobilized the masses for the political and military struggle which had entered a new and victorious stage. Success was guaranteed as the correlation of forces (Soviet term for the world balance of power) had changed in the favor of the forces of progress, peace, and Socialism led by the USSR. (9 Jan 80, p. 4)

The Republic of South Africa as the Puppet of Imperialism

South Africa was portrayed as a puppet of the imperialists, especially the United States. Much of the turmoil now taking place in and around this African nation was the result of the racist Americans, and other westerners, attempting to optimize their business interests.

The article went on to state that with the White House trying to stir up Cold War tensions again, the South Africans were apt to become more aggressive in the region in order to better serve their masters. The South Africans were also accused of possessing not only the wherewithal to wage nuclear war, but also the motivation. (25 Jan 80, p. 4)

Zimbabwe - Rhodesia

Great Britain's Duplicity

Great Britain was accused of duplicity because of its activity in its newly contrite colony of Rhodesia. Under the direction of Lord Soames (a relative of the infamous imperialist Winston Churchill), the "cooperative" patriotic forces of Nkomo and Mugabe were being lured out of the bush and disarmed while Rhodesian troops and South African Army units continued to roam freely.

The likelihood of a free election was slight as the forces of Muzorewa and Smith controlled all the newspapers, radio, television and other means of communication. In addition, these two leaders were the recipients of millions in financial aid from businesses headquartered in Great Britain and South Africa. (13 Jan 80, p. 5)

Meeting of the Frontline States

The heads of the Frontline States met in Mozambique to discuss the situation in Zimbabwe since the signing of the London agreements. Their final communique mentioned that they and the Patriotic Front were strictly abiding by the terms of the accords. They voiced discontent, however, over the uneasiness engendered by the tactics of the British in that country. In particular, they claimed that the British were permitting South African racist forces to maneuver at will in that country. (14 Jan 80, p. 1)

Soviet Support For Liberation Movement

Robert Mugabe was quoted as stating that the success of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe would have been "unthinkable" without the "all-round" assistance provided by the Socialist nations. (18 Jan 80, p. 1)